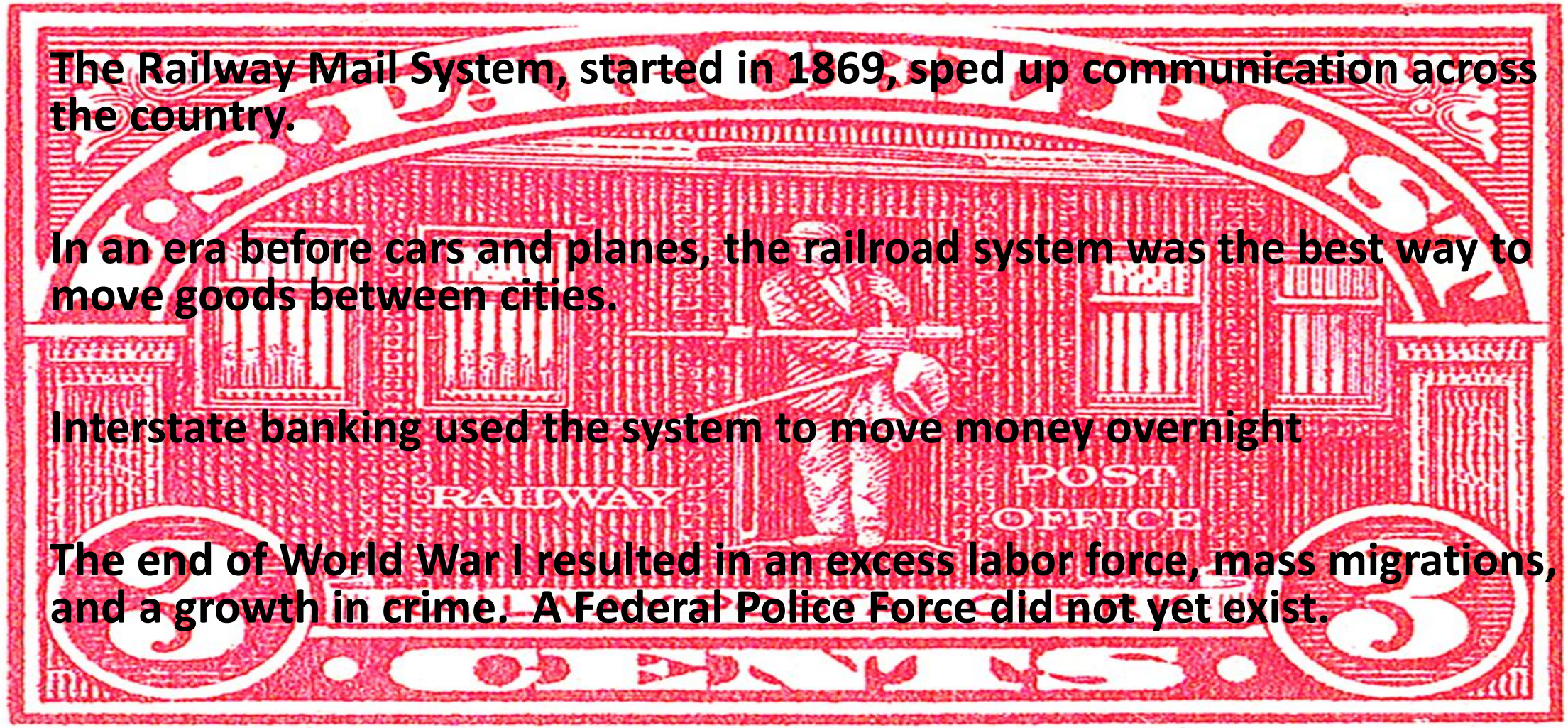
The Kansas Nebraska Series
A Postal History Study

Rochester Philatelic Association

Mark Scheuer

June 11, 2015

Railway Mail in the Early 1900's



The Railway Mail System, started in 1869, sped up communication across the country.

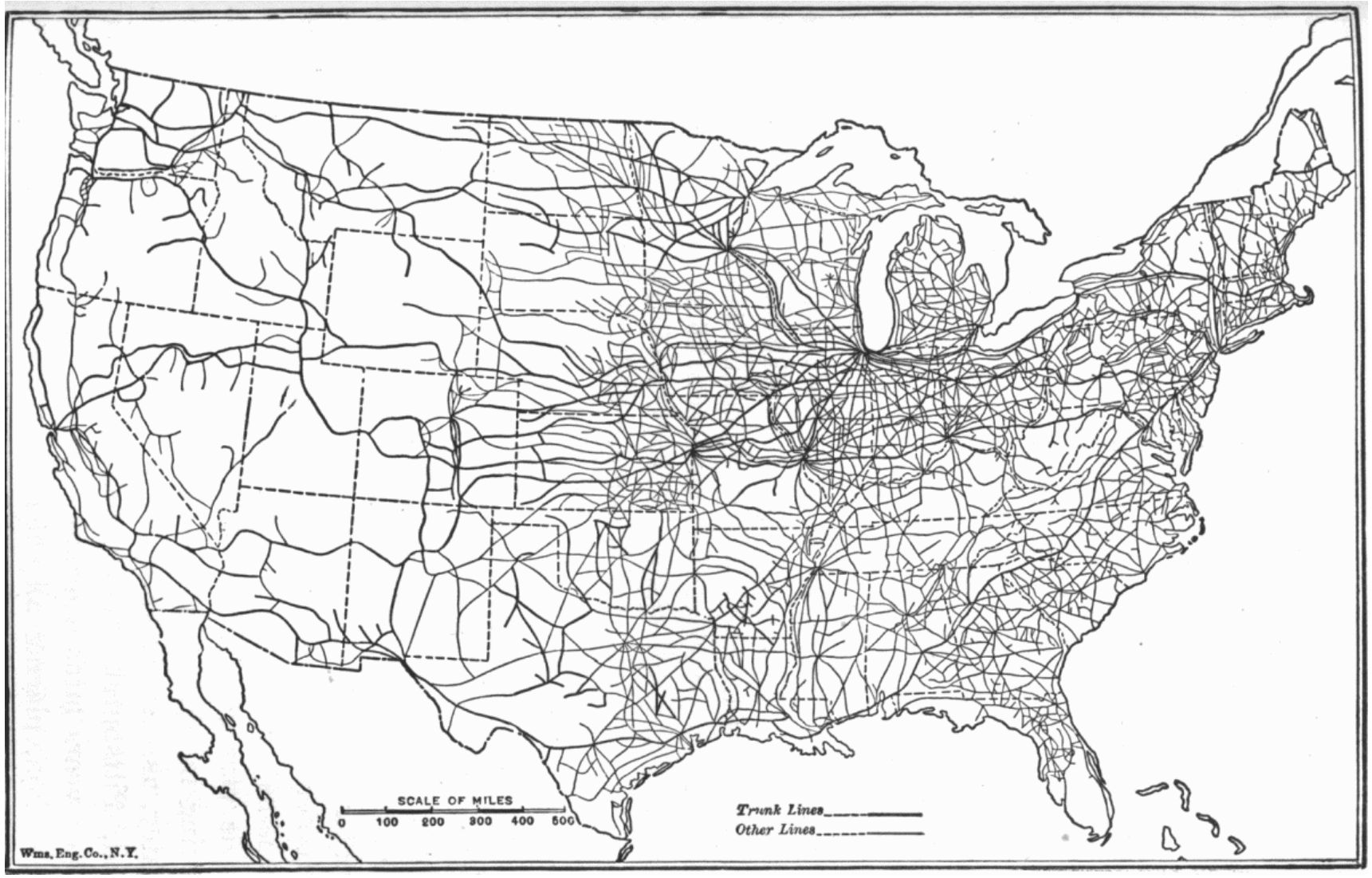
In an era before cars and planes, the railroad system was the best way to move goods between cities.

Interstate banking used the system to move money overnight

The end of World War I resulted in an excess labor force, mass migrations, and a growth in crime. A Federal Police Force did not yet exist.

US Railroads in 1870

US Railroads in 1918



President Harding Calls Out the Marines

From 1919-1921, $6 million was lost to mail robbers.

PMG Hays asked President Harding to use Marines to guard the mail.

On Nov 7, 1921, Harding directed Sec. of the Navy Edwin Denby to comply.

2200 men and 53 officers were deployed across the nation from bases in San Diego and Virginia.

Between the time the marines were deployed and March 15, 1922, when they were withdrawn, not one mail robbery was reported.

Denby’s Order to the Marines

“You must, when on guard duty, keep your weapons in hand and, if attacked, shoot and shoot to kill. There is no compromise in this battle with bandits. If two Marines guarding a mail car, for example, are suddenly covered by a robber, neither must hold up his hands, but both must begin shooting at once. One may be killed, but the other will get the robbers and save the mail. When our Marine Corps men go as guards over the mail, that mail must be delivered or there must be a dead Marine at the post of duty.” – E. Denby

More Crime and a Second Deployment

In April 1923, a St. Louis mail messenger was “relieved” of $2.4 million of registered mail.

By 1926, crime was rampant and PMG Harry New asked congress for funds for a special armed guard force and armored rail cars.

While this was being done, the Marines were again called out. Both the robbers and marines were armed with automatic rifles and Thompson submachine guns.

The marine force was replaced, in Feb 1927, with guards working directly for the POD.

Small Post Offices Still in Danger

Robberies were not limited to big shipments by rail.

Small post offices were robbed of mail and stamps.

Stamps were funneled into Chicago and sold to businesses at discounts.

The PMG developed a plan to overprint stamps in each state to detect out of state sales.

The Kansas Nebraska Overprints (Sc. 658-679)

Postal Bulletin Announcements April 1929

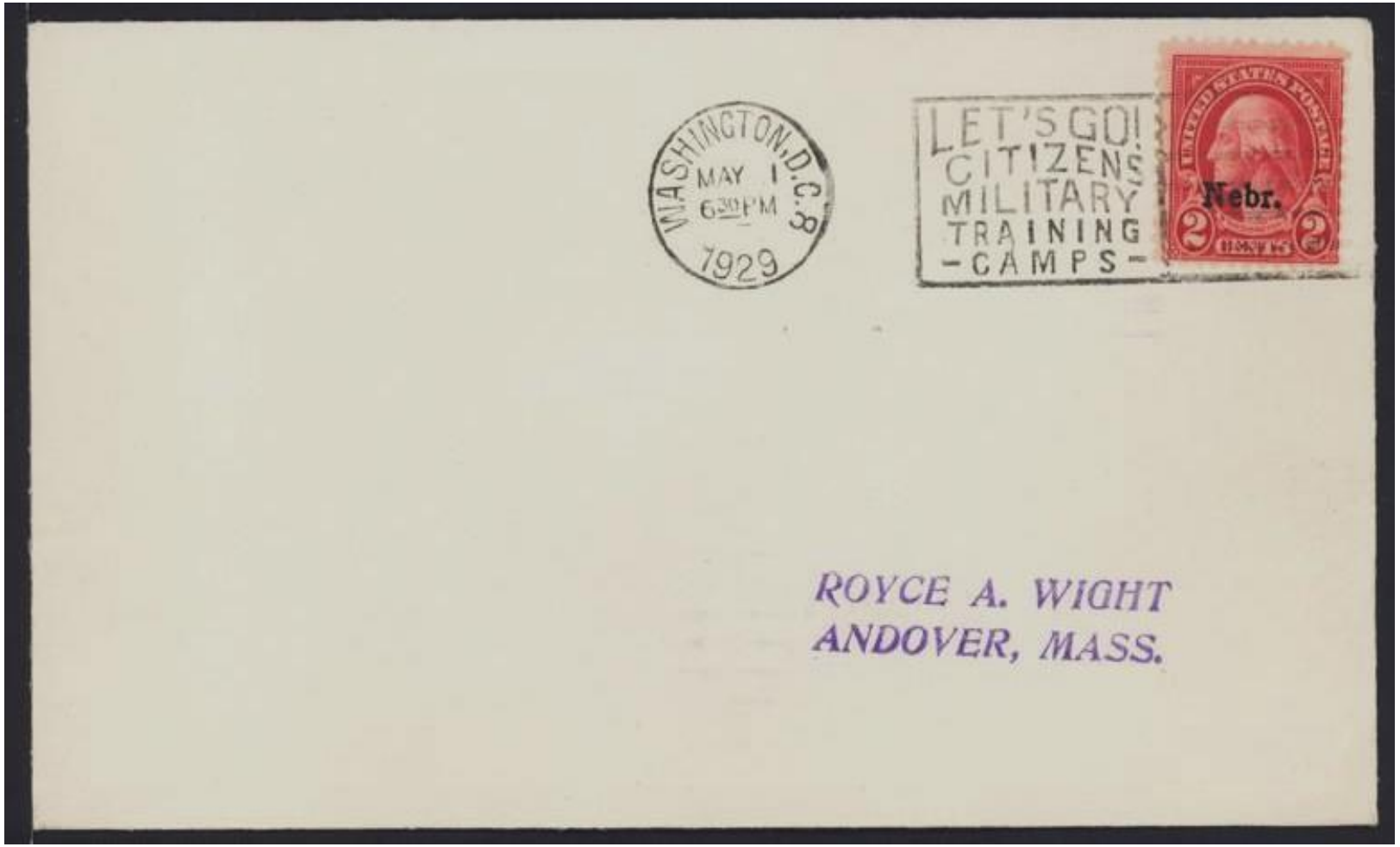
On April 9th:

- Stamps sold at PO's within respective states but valid nationwide
- Use supply of unsurcharged stamps until exhausted.
- No official First Day of Use for any Post Office.
- Postmasters not to accept mail orders for stamps outside of state.
- First Day of Issue covers will be sold in Washington DC on May 1, 1929
- First order of stamps from collectors should not include other varieties of stamps

On April 30th

- Postmasters should not precancel these stamps.

Official FDC from Washington D.C.



Official FDC from Washington D.C.

Unofficial Earliest Know Usages

All 22 stamps were used on cover prior to May 1, 1929. The earliest dates are listed in the Scott catalog in the First Day Covers section.

More about Newton, Ks. FDC's

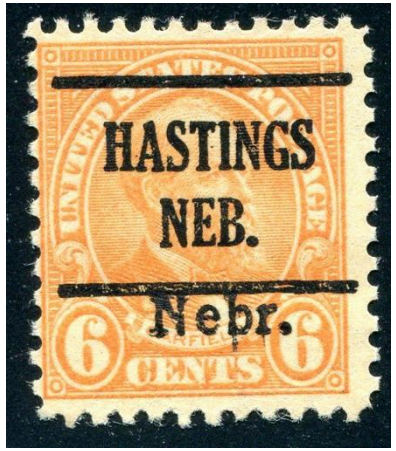
- According to the Scott Specialized catalog, First Day Cover section, Newton was the EKU (4/15/29) location for the 1 cent (658), 6 cent (664), and 8 cent (666) issues.
- Colby, Ks was the EKU location for the other 8 stamps on April 16. A set of 11 matched covers sold for 7500 in Siegel sale 894, lot 448.
- The covers below, not in my collection, are all from various Regency Superior sales.
- They indicate that Newton only had the three stamps in stock on April 15th. Three of the covers are overpaid for the endorsed services.

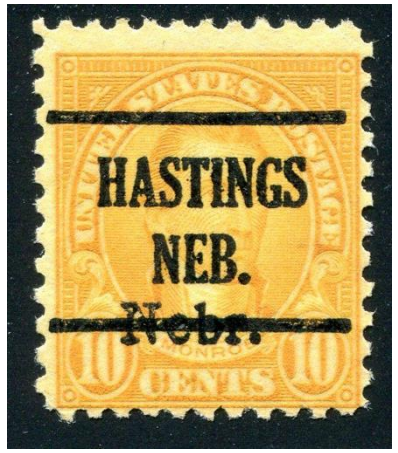
More Newton, Ks. FDCs

Not FDCs (but listed on EBAY as such)

No Precancels?

175 varieties are listed, including out of state. Some inverted.





Initial Collection Guidelines

- Mailed from within state
- Paying proper postage
- Non-philatelic
- ~$10 per cover
- Try to avoid fakes

Most of these rules were broken.

US Postage Rates in 1929

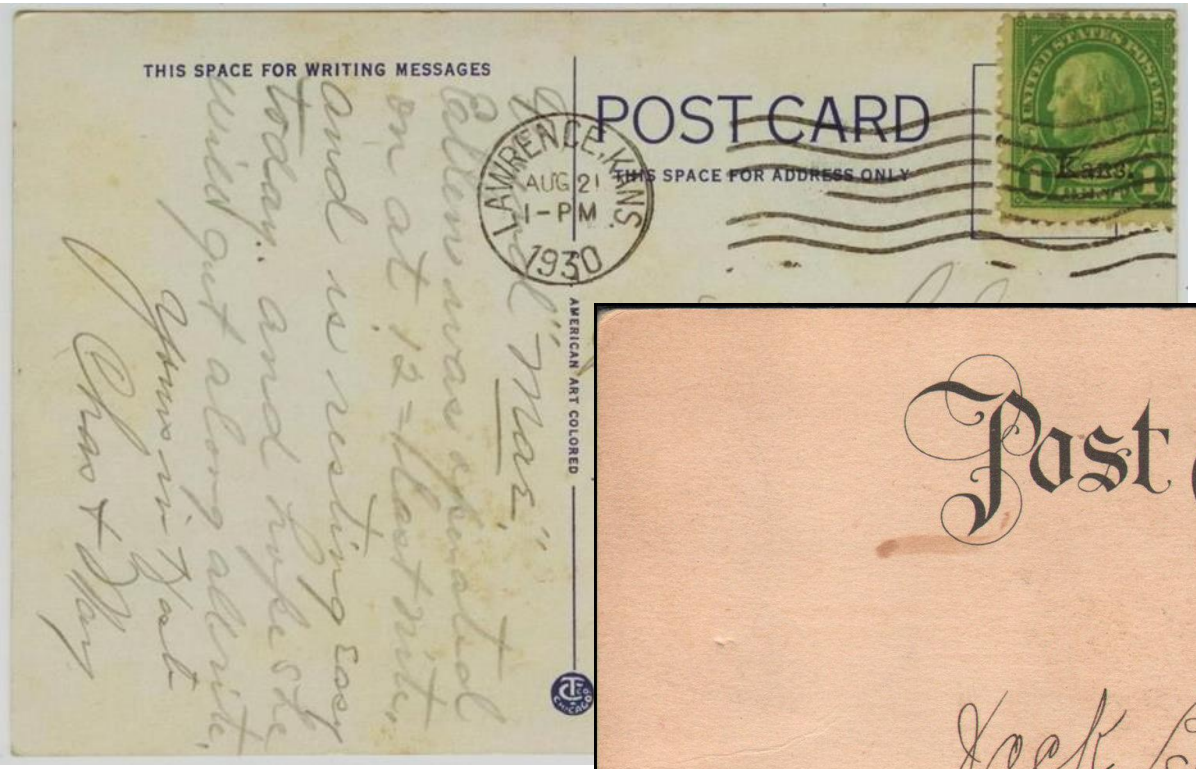
First class mail

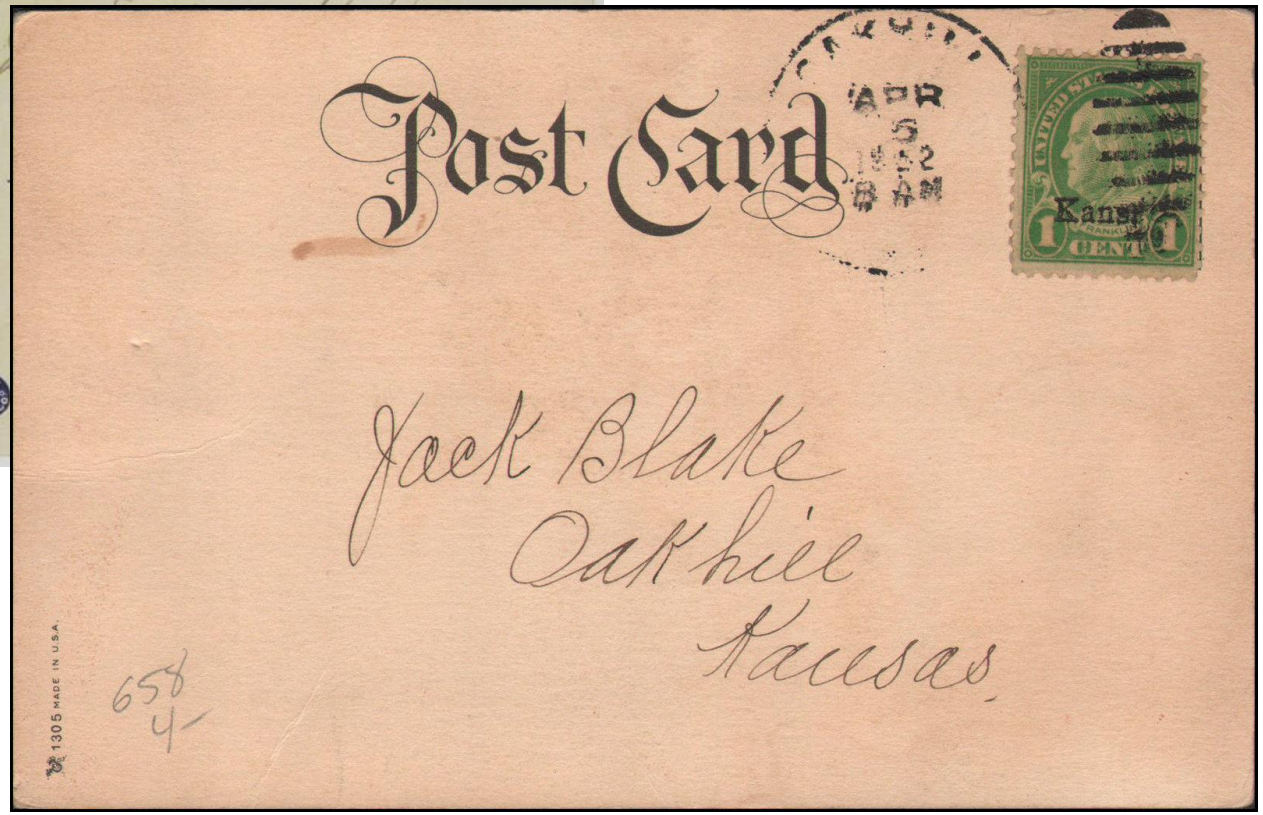
- Postal Card 1c
- Regular Mail 2c
- Air Mail 5c first oz. 10c each add. oz.

Other

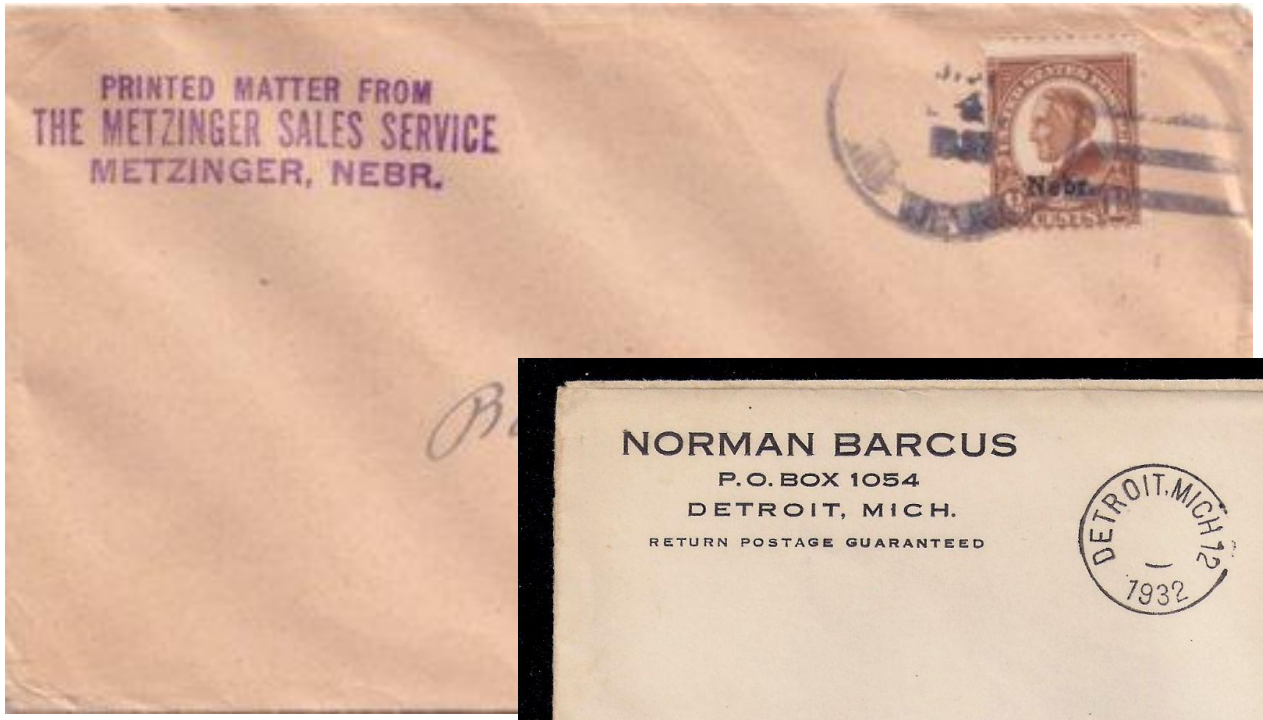
- 3rd Class (Including unsealed greeting cards) 1½c
- Special Delivery 10c surcharge
- Registration 15c surcharge

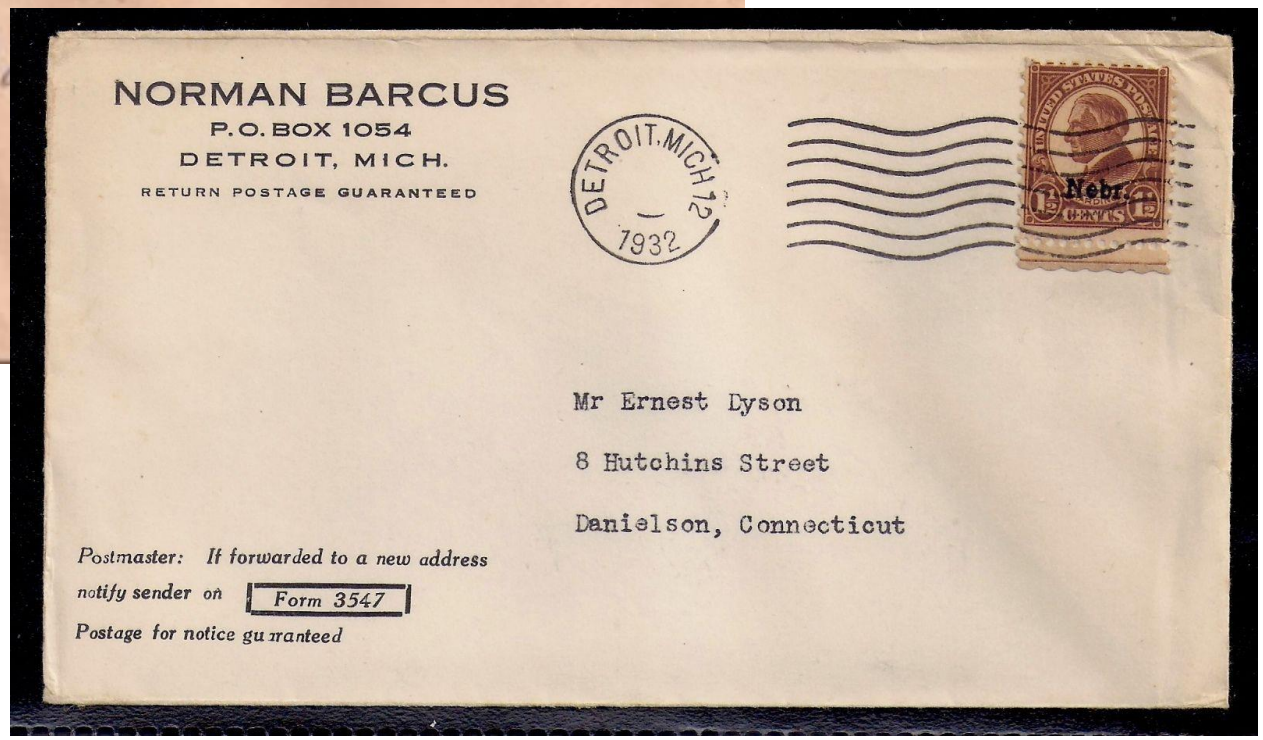
1 cent Postal Card



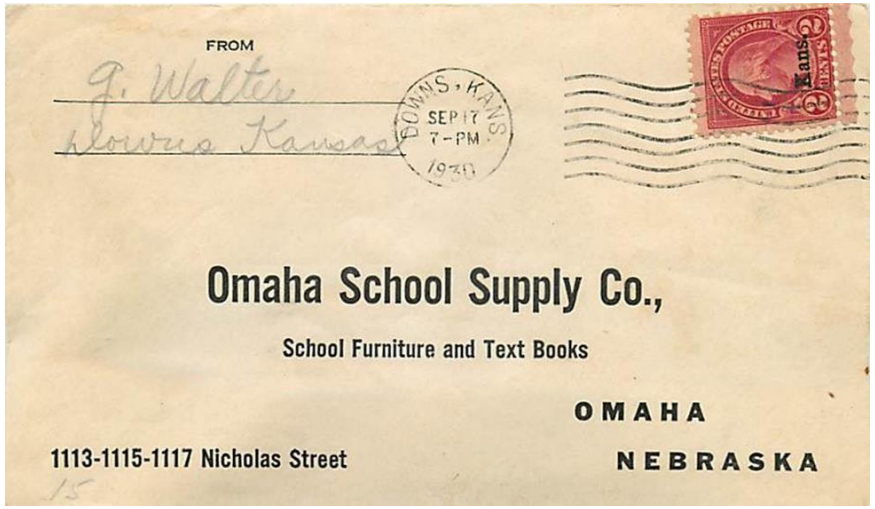


1 ½ Cent Third Class Mail



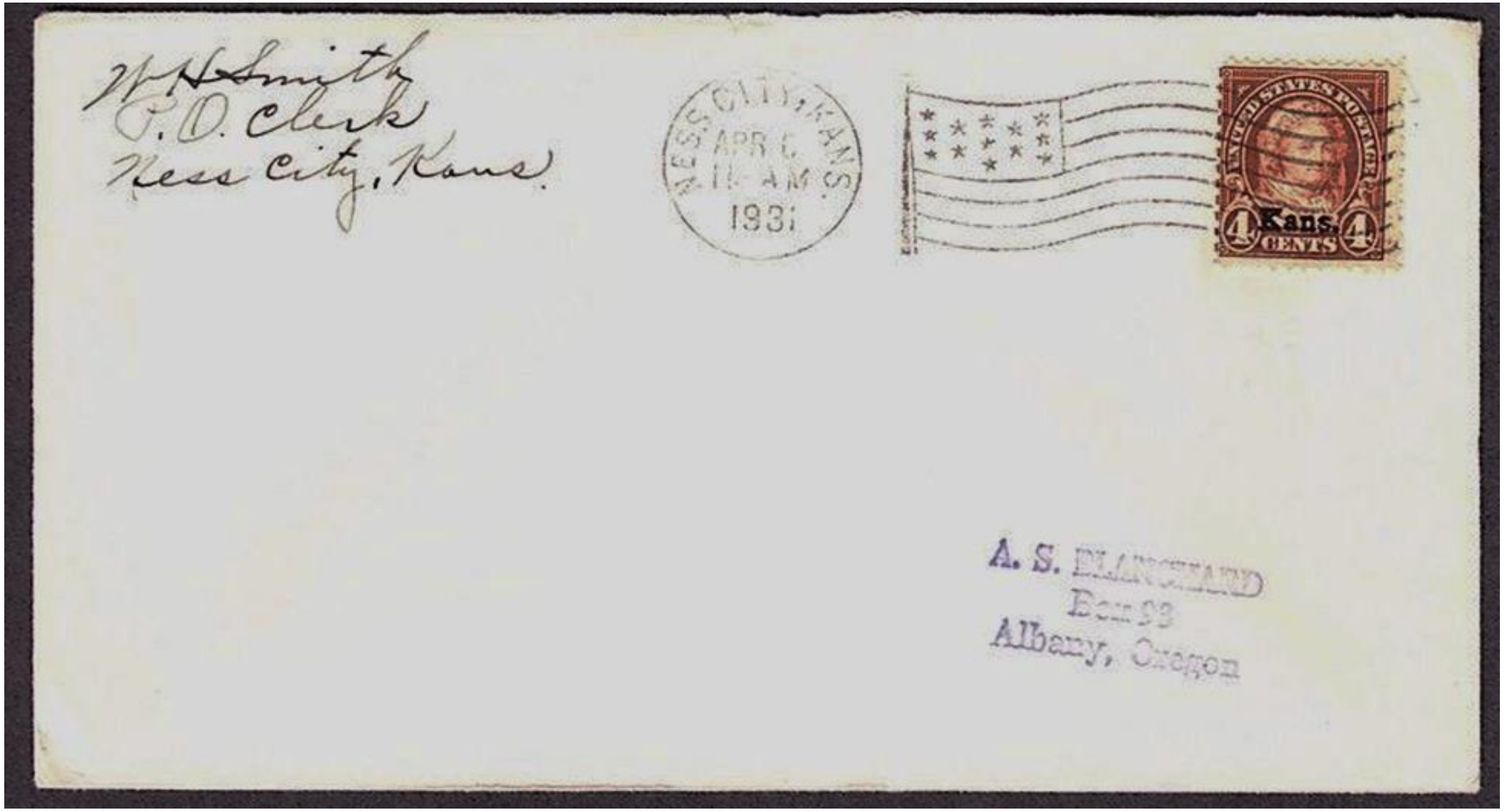


2 Cent Regular Mail



2c Regular Mail – Corner Advertising

Multiple Rate Domestic Mail or Philatelic?



5 Cent Air Mail

5 Cent Air Mail with other issues

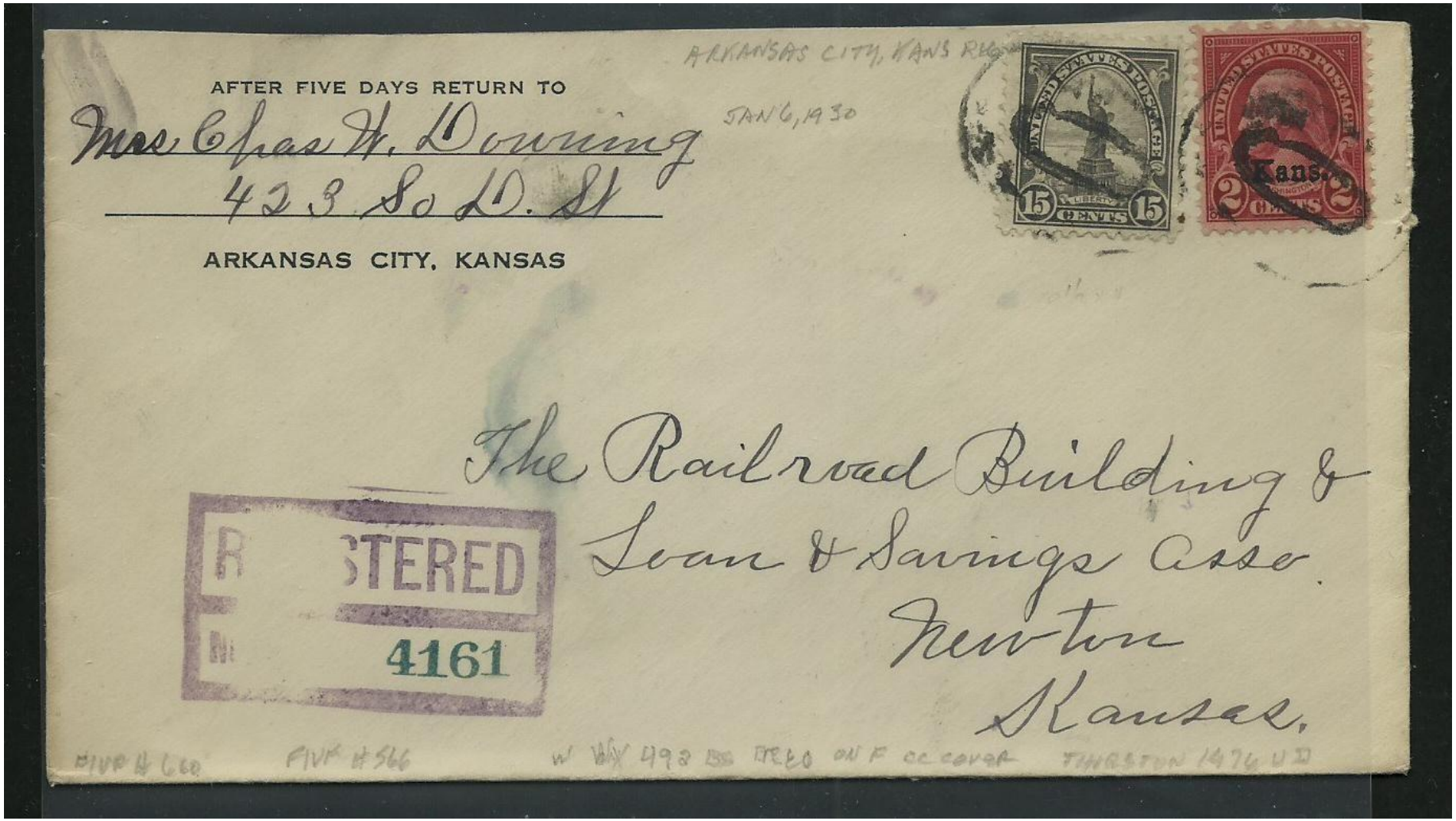
5 Cent Air Mail with other Issues

1 ½ cent 3rd Class Greeting Card

Special Delivery 10 Cent Surcharge

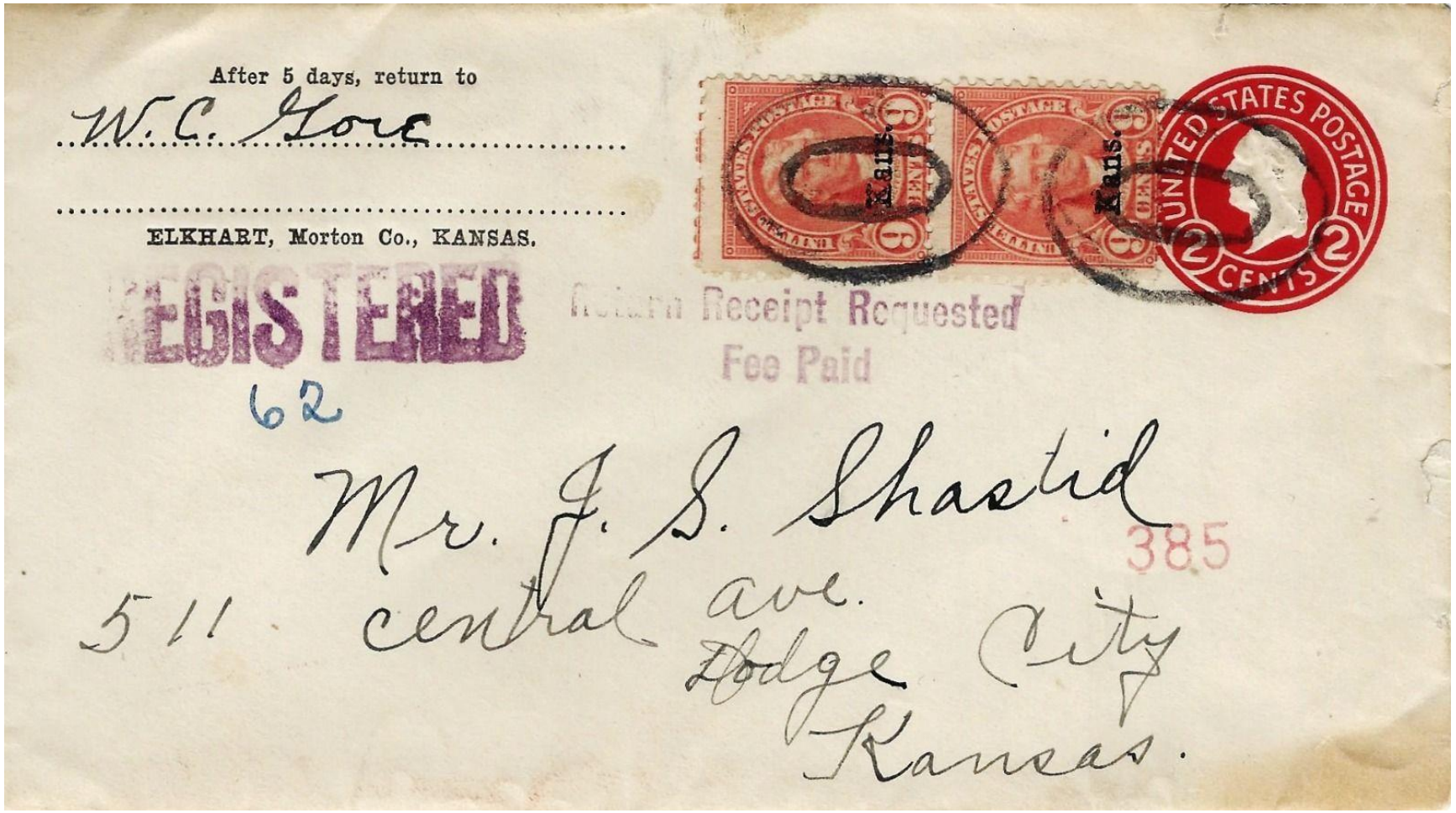
Registration 15 Cent Surcharge

Registration 15 Cent Surcharge w/other issues



Registration 15 Cent Surcharge w/other issues

Registration Cover 1930 w/ return receipt



Registration to Germany

July 6, 1932 Rate Changes

Postal cards – remain at 1c

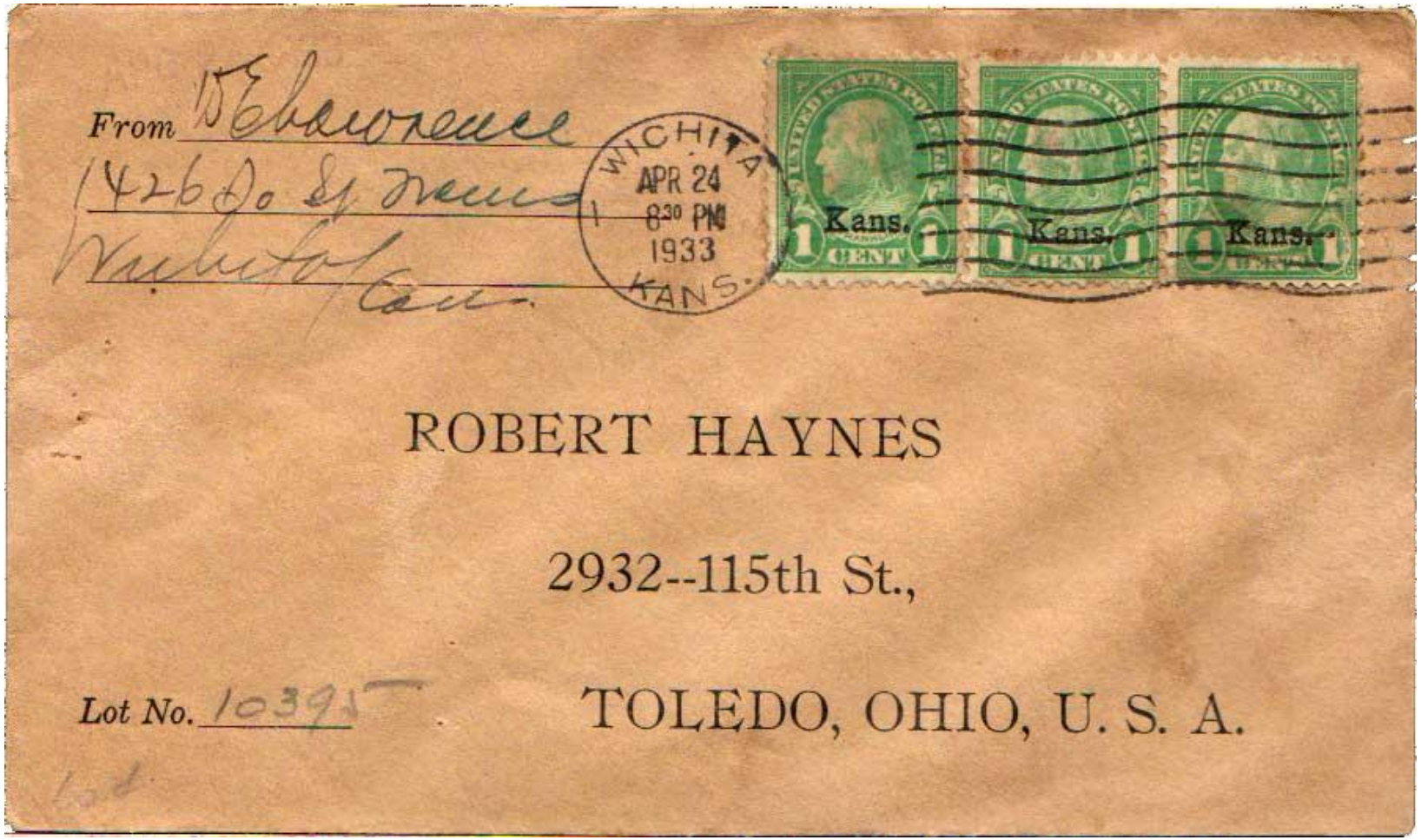
Regular 1st Class Mail – increase to 3c

Third Class Mail – remain at 1½c

Air Mail – increase to 8c for 1st oz., 13c for each add. oz.

Temporary Increased Rates for 2 years

Regular Mail Increase to 3 cents



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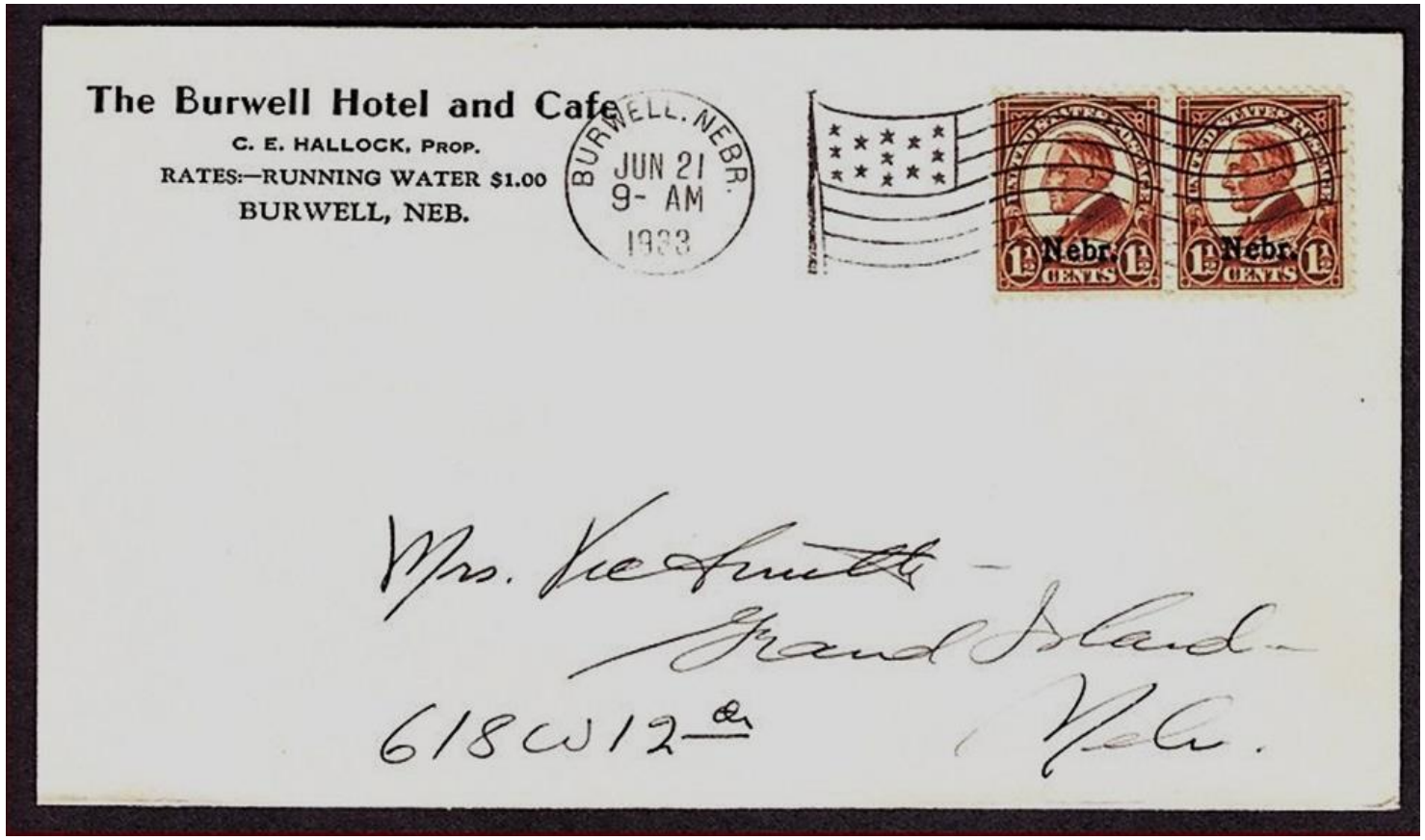
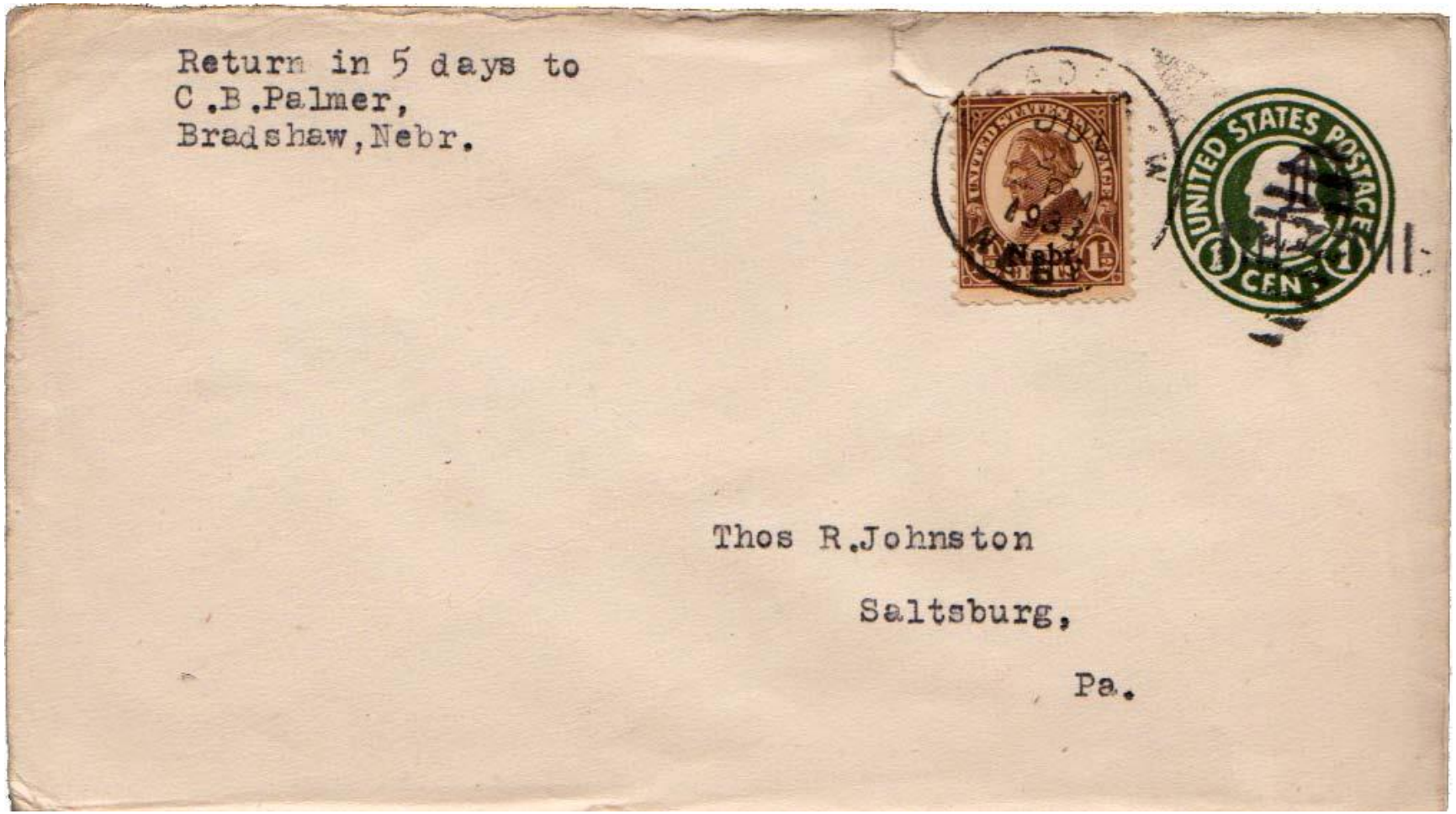


Regular Mail Increase to 3 cents



Air Mail Increase to 8 cents

July 1, 1934 Rate Changes

Postal Cards remains at 1c

Regular mail remains at 3c

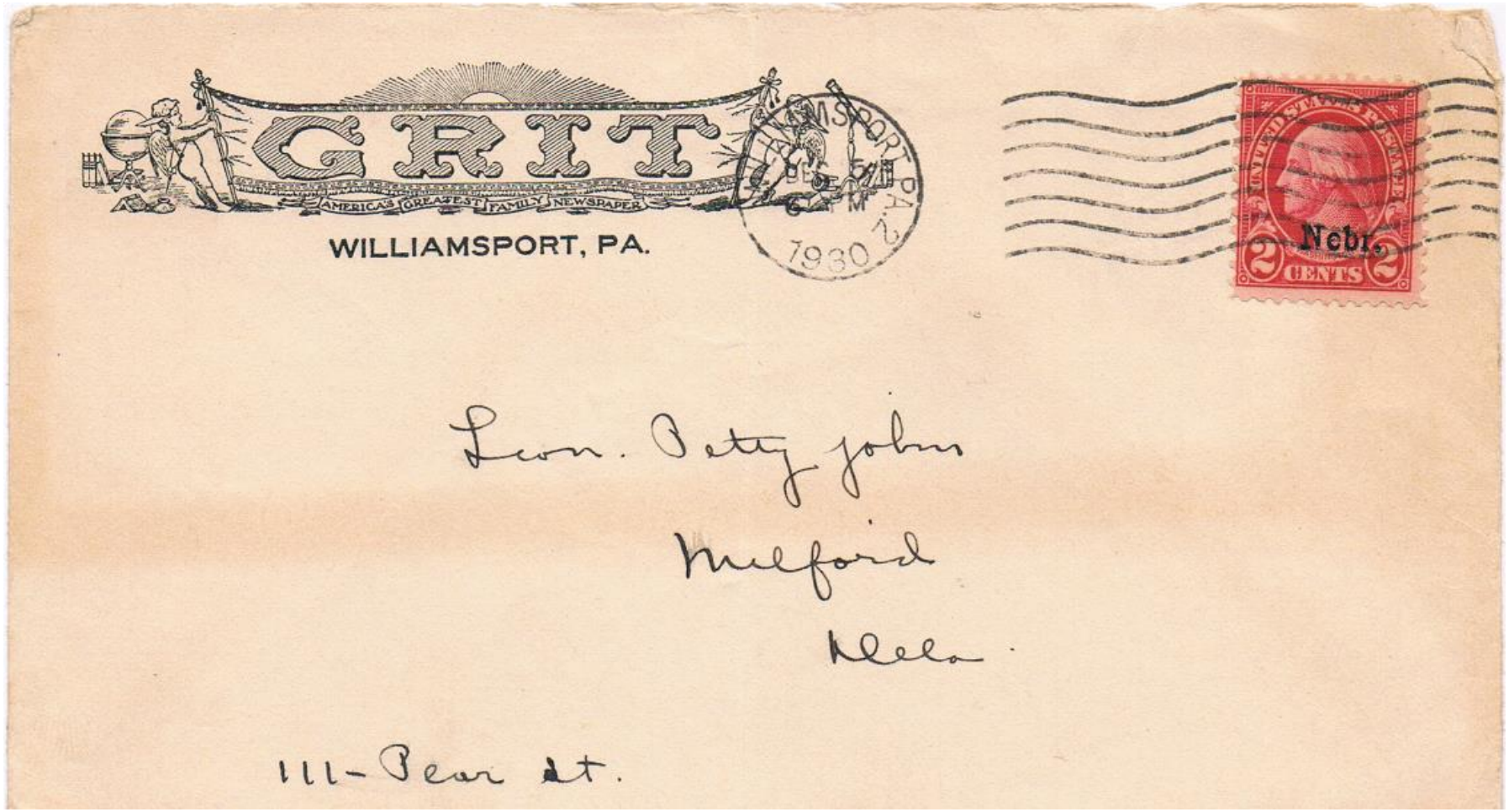
2nd Class business mail reduced to pre-1932 rates

Air Mail reduced to 6c per oz. and add. fraction

Moral: no guarantees for rate reductions promised in 1932.

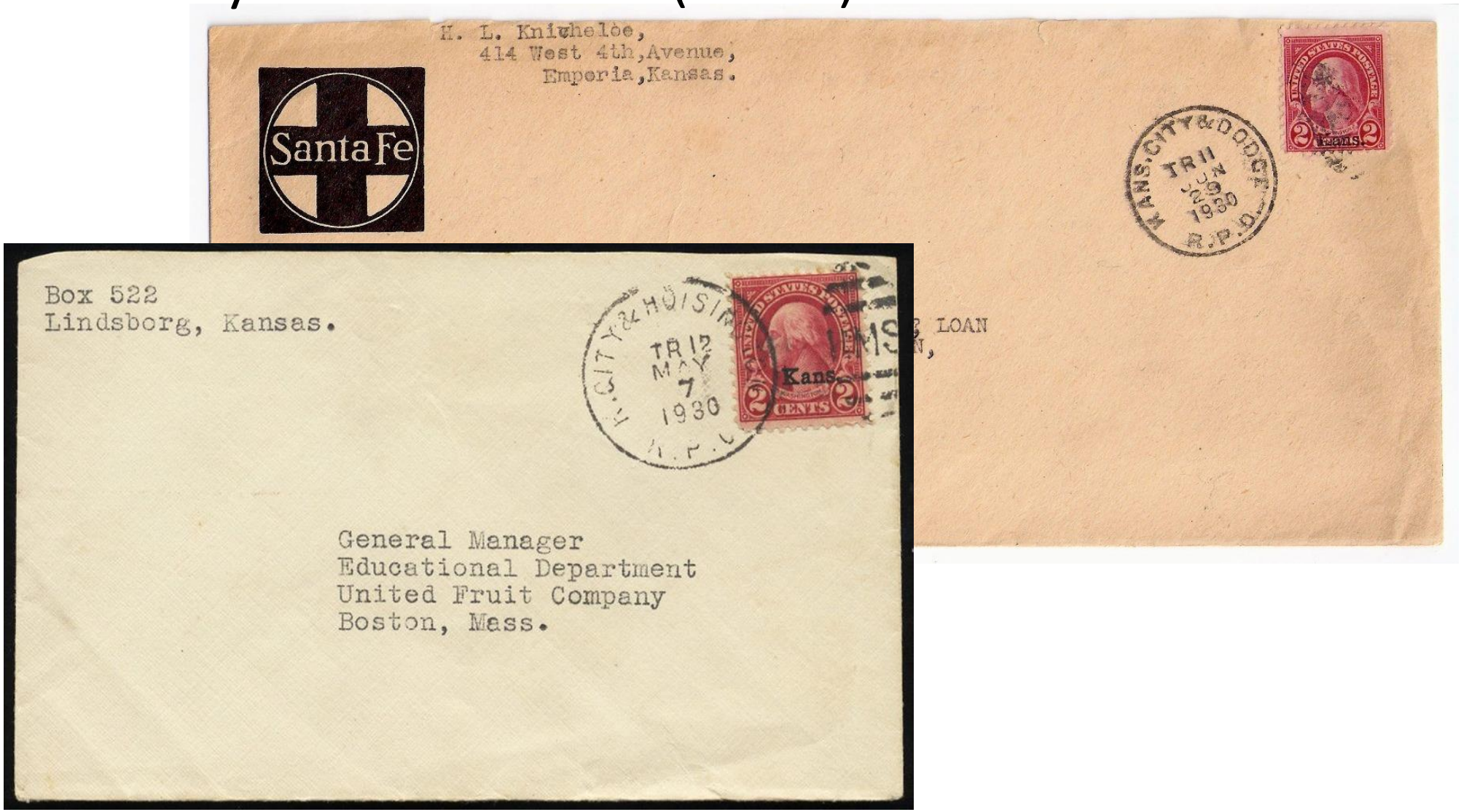
Airmail reduced to 6 cents

Other Covers – Out of State SASE to Nebraska

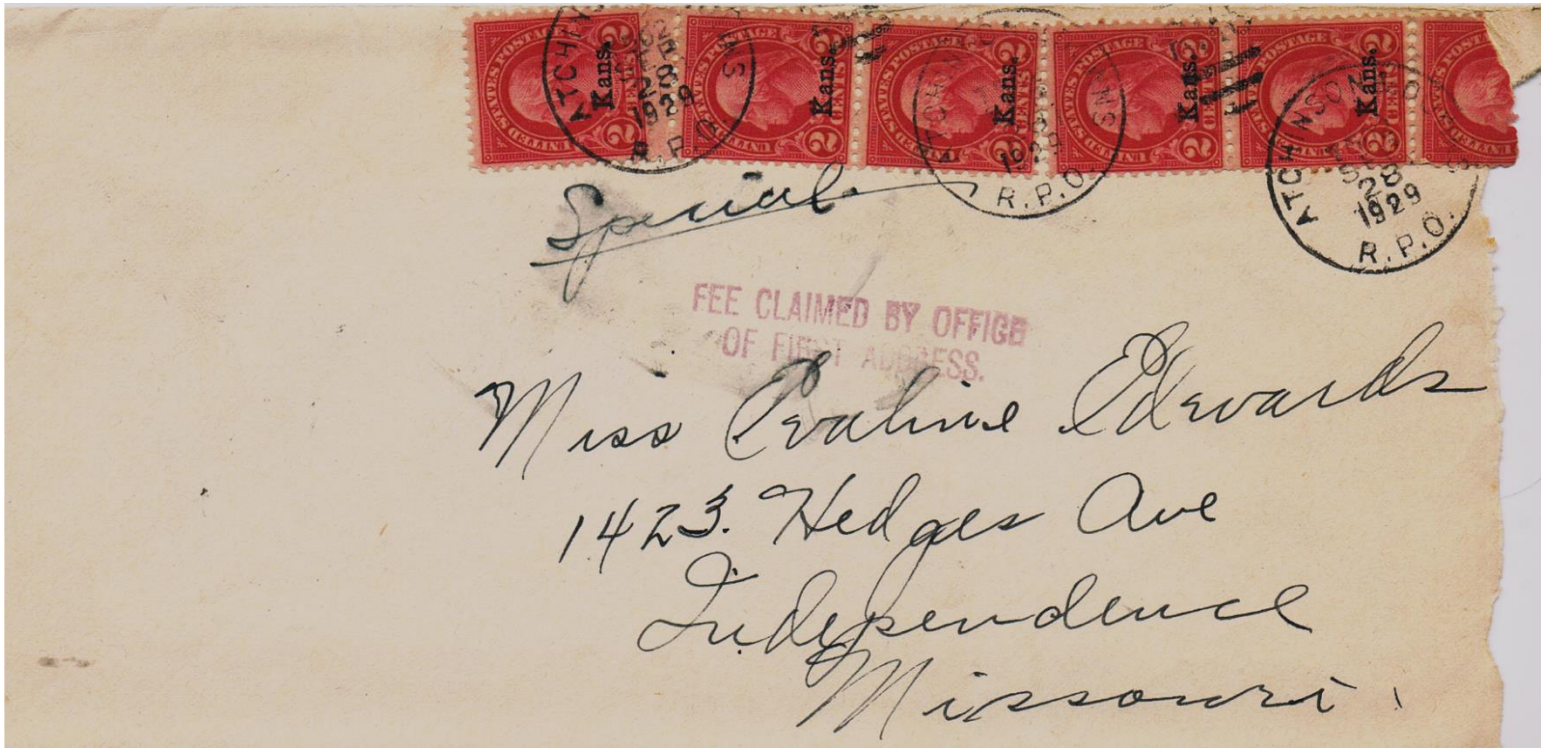


Other Covers – Out of State SASE to Kansas

Railway Post Office (RPO) Cancels



RPO – Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Spec. Del.



Covers with Postage Due

Closing Remarks

- The program was somewhat of a failure.
- Some Postmasters refused the stamps thinking they were precancelled.
- Some Post Offices did pre-cancel the stamps, including out of state offices.
- Collectors worried about the cost of the stamps 48 states x $0.55. Imagine paying $26.40 for US stamps.
- Kansas uses outnumber Nebraska uses by about 2:1
- I currently have 16 of the 22 stamps used properly within state. I'm missing the 6c, 7c, and 10c from both states, although I have some of them on out of state covers.

Closing Remarks

- The limited one-year supply makes covers past 1932 quite scarce
- The 3c stamp on regular mail after July 1, 1932 is very rare. The Washington Bicentennial set came out in Feb 1932 and was very popular on mail.
- Short supply and other new issues, like the Arbor Day 2c released in Nebraska, also helped replace the series.
- After 1932, the US & FDR issued many new stamps.
- Many covers were destroyed to fill album spaces with used stamps.
- Both used and mint stamps have high catalog values, compared to other stamps of the era.

A Gem from the Collection